1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

munalty something like that of Siouan Indian and buffalo in olden time, whereby both may benefit and whereby the more intelligent communal certainly profits greatly. The flesh of the turtle yields food; some of its bones yield implements; its carapace yields a house covering, a convenient substitute for umbrella or dog-tent, a temporary buckler, and an emergency tray or cistern, as well as a comfortable cradle at the beginning of life and the conventional coffin at its end; while the only native foot-gear known is a sandal made from the integument of a turtle-flipper.

FIG. 20—Turtle harpoon.

Doubtless the eggs and newly hatched young of the turtle are eaten, and analogy with other peoples indicates that the females are sometimes captured at the laying grounds or on their way back to water; but observation is limited to the taking of the adult animal at sea by means of a specialized harpoon. A typical specimen of this apparatus, as constructed since the introduction of flotsam iron, is illustrated in figure 20. It comprises a point 3 or 4 inches long, made from a nail or bit of stout wire, rudely sharpened by hammering the tip (cold) between cobbles, and dislodging the loosened scales and splinters by thrusts and twirlings in the ground; this is set firmly and cemented with mesquite gum into a foreshaft of hard wood, usually 4 or 5 inches long, notched to receive a cord and rounded at the proximal end; the rounded end of this foreshaft fits into a socket of the main shaft, which may be either a cane-stalk (as shown in the figure) or a section of mesquite root; while a stout cord is firmly knotted about the foreshaft and either attached to the distal portion of the main shaft or carried along it to the hand of the user. The main shaft is usually 10 or 12 feet long, with the harpoon socket in the larger end, and is manipulated by a fisherman sitting or standing on his balsa. On catching sight of a turtle lying in the water, he approaches stealthily, preferably from the rear yet in such wise as not to cast a frightening shadow, sets the foreshaft in place, guides the point close to the carapace, and then by a quick thrust drives the metal through the shell. The frictional resistance between the chitin and the metal holds the point in place, and although the foreshaft is jerked out at the first movement of the transfixed animal the cord prevents escape; and after partial tiring

8: Ascher E-5 (1960) 1962 NU31 Seri NU31

for the point may come from the transmission of an abandoned car or from flotsam. The wood for the hafting can be mesquite or ironwood, both indigenous in the area; waste from boat construction or other scraps of wood may also be used. Rubber for the gasket may be obtained from a worn automobile tire. The wrapping cord and lead cord are store bought, and mesquite gum is used to seal the hafting.

In manufacturing foreshafts Seri fishermen use three tools: a knife, a hacksaw blade, and a triangular file. The hacksaw blade is used to cut an appropriate length of metal for the point and to rough out the barb; the triangular file is employed to finish the point barb and stem; the tang of the file is used to puncture the hole in the gasket which is to receive the point. The shaping of the hafting and gasket, and the cutting and wrapping of the lead cords, are accomplished with a knife.

With regard to the method of manufacture, all fishermen report essentially the same procedure. They describe the pattern as a series of steps under two headings: (1) shaping and (2) assembling. Two individuals did not mention steps 1c and 2b, and the others considered these two steps to be optional.

1) Shaping
   a) Shaping the metal into a point
   b) Shaping the wood for hafting the point
      α) Shaping the general form
      β) Splitting the form lengthwise and grooving each half to receive the point (see section in Figure 1)
   c) Shaping the rubber for the gasket

2) Assembling
   a) Placing the mesquite gum in the grooved portions of each half of the hafting (see section in Figure 1)
   b) Placing the gasket on the point
   c) Inserting the point base into the hafting and reuniting the split hafting form
   d) Wrapping with the wrapping cord and with it interweaving the lead cord
   e) Refinishing the hafting base to fit the mainshaft socket

Four men were able to explain the foregoing procedure in detail and were in agreement in the following matters. The point is shaped before the hafting because its length determines the length of the latter, and because the diameter of the point base dictates the grooving of the haft. The gasket is shaped after the point and the hafting because the diameter of its hole is determined by that of the point base and its total diameter by that of the hafting. The mesquite gum then secures the point and seals the hafting. Interweaving the lead cord with the wrapping cord secures the former to the hafting.

The amount of time required to complete a foreshaft shows marked variation. This is not primarily a function of the working habits of the artisan. If all the materials are present, the time it takes to make a foreshaft ranges from four to eight hours, but if all the materials are not available, as much as a year may be required. There may, for example, be a considerable lapse of time between the shaping of a point and the shaping of a gasket when material for the

so all the other flies could see and also come to this dead thing."

A few weeks ago, Antonio Herrera had a very vivid dream. He dreamed that he was hunting in the mountains for deer and came across a cave. (These volcanic mountains are pitted with caves.) He went into the cave and saw all kinds of things dear to the heart of a Seri---plenty of rifles, lots of cartridges, knives, *manta* (unbleached cotton), necklaces, red bandannas, blue overalls, *plata*, or silver, and many other things.

When he awoke he sought his father Manuel Encinas, who is a medicine man and interpreter of dreams, to explain his dream to him. The price demanded by Manuel was six *tiras*---or 30-30 cartridges, a very high price, according to Seri standard. The explanation was this:

It was true that the cave was there and all the things in it just as seen and described by Antonio, but in order to find it he would have to fast nine days and go without water that length of time also, in the heat of summer. Then the way would appear to reach the cave. So far, Antonio has not attempted the fast.

I witnessed the operation of making a certain kind of pitch or tar which the Seris use to make the seams in their canoes or boats tight. The women pound up the dried pulp next to the outside skin of a dead *pitahalla* cactus (organ cactus). This is very dry and brown in color and the pieces are pounded up to a dry powder with a wash or shore rock in a dried deer hide. This is placed in a *batello*, or flat basket, and manipulated so that the coarse pieces come to the top and are scraped off and thrown away. The fine powder is then put in a five gallon can and some porpoise or sea-lion oil or horse oil is poured on it and stirred into a thick gummy mass. When thoroughly mixed it is put over the fire, in an olla, to boil and continually stirred for an hour or two until it is the consistency and has the appearance of coal tar. While being worked it is kept heated and applied to seams inside and outside the boat. It hardens just like tar and answers the same purpose.

Since the corn, which had kept this band of Seris in food, disappeared two days before we came, and they had barely kept going on seeds and a few fish, and they all had decided to leave camp with us in the morning---the women walking and the men and some children in boats---it was necessary to supply them with some food to take them to the hunting grounds of the *cahuama*, or sea turtles, and land them on the Island. The *cahuama* would furnish them meat---their favorite and national food, and the shores would supply them with clams, oysters, crabs and other sea food.

So the whole band was called around our camp and each family was furnished with two cups of corn, two of beans, some green coffee and a cup of cube sugar. For the first time our camp was free of Indians, and we ate and went to bed in peace.

The amenities of civilization were laid aside and forgotten in